

# Applegater

Photo by Mikell Nielsen www.applegater.org



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## Big changes coming to Cantrall-Buckley Park!

BY TOM CARSTENS AND DAVID LAANANEN

We're well on our way to making even more improvements to our lovely Cantrall-Buckley Park! Now that we've completed our new campground restroom, our state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system, and our road-repaving project, your Park Committee is ready to begin work on a new playground and restroom facility in the picnic-swim area down by the river.

### New playground

Plans are shaping up for replacing most of the old playground equipment. All new modern equipment (see photo below) has been selected and sourced. It's going to be a safe, fun facility for our kids and accessible for those with disabilities—and will incorporate natural elements into its design. A big thanks to the Applegate moms who helped with the design!

Purchase and construction will be a total community project, with donated funds and labor. Cost of the project will be around \$50,000. We're looking to fund this with a combination of grants and donations. Rogue Community College is helping out with intern and administrative support. The target for donations by the Applegate community is \$30,000. The new playground should be in by fall of next year.

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## Grape Talk: What does the future hold for Applegate Valley wines?



BY DEBBIE TOLLEFSON

The Applegate Valley is attracting high-caliber winemakers who are serious about creating the finest wines possible using the best farming and growing practices. That makes Kara Olmo, of Woodridge Creek Winery, enthusiastic about the future of the Applegate Valley wine industry. She is certain that with continued active marketing and the development of national and international markets (Valley View wines are now sold in Japan), as well as the increase in the quality and quantity of great wines coming from our region, the future is bright.



Kara Olmo of Woodridge Creek Vineyards gives high marks to Applegate Valley wines.

**This optimism is backed up** by the statistics I found in the 2012 wine census for the state of Oregon compiled by the Southern Oregon University Research Center (SOURCE). Until 2012, vineyard census reports were conducted by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and were pretty inaccurate. In 2011, to ensure more accuracy the USDA turned over the task to the states. In Oregon, the winery and vineyard census is overseen by Dr. Greg Jones, a Southern Oregon University professor who "specializes in the study of climate structure and suitability for viticulture, and how climate variability and change influence grapevine growth, wine production and quality" (<http://www.sou.edu/envirostudies/faculty/jones.html>), and whom we interviewed for one of our previous Grape Talk articles. Greg was charged with getting precise information about Oregon's wine industry such as varietals grown and tonnage crushed throughout the state.

The 2012 report shows a total vineyard count for the state of 905, up from 870 in 2011; the planted acreage in 2012 was 25,500, an increase of 25 percent from 20,400 acres in 2011. The yield per acre changes from year to year depending on many variables, but the price

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## Agriculture in the Applegate—the valley's pride

BY DIANA COOGLE

From the days of the first settlers in the Applegate, sheep and cattle have grazed the area's green pastures and hay has grown on its wide fields. From pioneers to newcomers, from cattle and sheep to lettuce and lavender, agriculture in the Applegate is the valley's pride.

**Frances Decker raises sheep** on land her father bought in 1934. In other cases, old farms have new owners. Priscilla and Steven Weaver raise Soay sheep on the old Saltmarsh Farm up Little Applegate Road. Their neighbor, Peter Salant, raises cattle on the old Kleinhammer Ranch that once covered 2,000 acres. Mary and Vince Alionis established their Whistling Duck Farm on what used to be the Sakraida's dairy farm.

Some farmers, like Mike Lapan, raise the oldest crop of the Applegate—hay—

while others have introduced new crops, like the lavender grown in vast fields of sweet-smelling purples by Sue and Derek Owen on their English Lavender Farm. Although we no longer see large turkey or rabbit farms here, Eldon Snyder and Alan Wall are still raising hogs commercially, and more llamas, alpacas, and goats than previously roam the pastures. Where tomatoes were once abundant, now a major crop is grapes and, in at least one case, on a farm off Hanley Road, pumpkins.

**The appeal of being a farmer** in the Applegate varies widely. Mike Lapan started growing hay in the '70s because, he says, "I like playing around on my tractor." The Weavers' fascination with heritage animals led to their breeding and selling the genetically unique Soay sheep. Peter Salant and his wife came here "to raise our

daughter rural" and took to cattle because Peter "couldn't find any good steaks here." The Alionises came to the Applegate for "better soil, better water, and good neighbors," all of which, they tell me, they found.

Agriculture in the Applegate, however beautiful and fulfilling, rarely provides a living. Maud Powell, of the Southern Oregon Research and Extension Service, points out that the lack of a big urban center coupled with an increase in the number of vegetable and seed producers has resulted in a glut on the local vegetable market. Salant says a commercially viable cattle herd would be 250 head, but, for economic reasons, he cut his herd to 25 mother cows and 20 to 25 yearling steers. As for raising sheep, 30 years ago wool sold for \$25 an ounce. This year it's \$20 a



These Soay lambs at Saltmarsh Ranch, owned by Priscilla and Steven Weaver, are about six weeks old. At birth they weigh from four to five pounds—about the size of a bag of sugar.

pound. Blame synthetic fibers.

**Nonetheless, agriculture can be commercially viable in the Applegate.** Whistling Duck Farm provides the sole income for the Alionis family, and, if the 800 cars on this year's lavender tour are indicative, lavender promises rewards for the Owens, who sell not only plants but also lavender oil and a

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